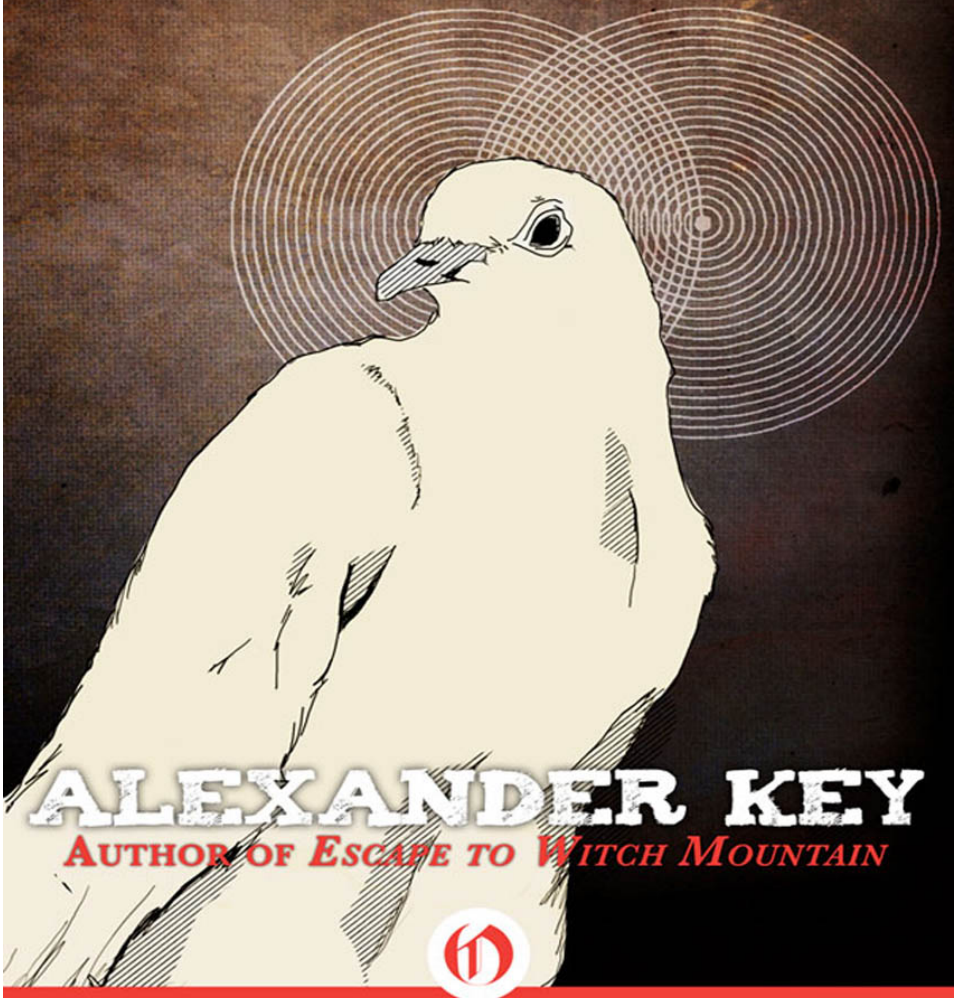
THE STRANGE WHITE DOVES

True Mysteries of Nature



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The Strange White Doves

True Mysteries of Nature

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OPEN ROAD
INTEGRATED MEDIA
NEW YORK

In all earnestness I dedicate this book to the youth of tomorrow. May you inherit at least a portion of the great thing that was—that incomparable wonder of space and stream and forest and unspoiled wild—which threatens to be no more unless enough of us can feel enough and care enough to restore and preserve it for you.

Are some birds and animals able to send messages to each other by telepathy?

Is there a silent language that all wild creatures are able to use?

Can an insect exchange thoughts with a human—can a plant read your mind?

Silly questions? Decide for yourself—but not until you have read the following pages. They may change your way of thinking.

1

THE STRANGE WHITE DOVES

THE FIRST MIRACLE, on that curious day of miracles, was in being at exactly the right place at the right time—and having Zan with us. Without young Zan, it would still be a mystery. Had we reached that particular spot in the mountains a minute later, we would not have seen what we found there. Had we missed it, we would have missed the big miracle that came later. Not only that, but you would not be reading this book, for I would not have been able to write it.

Fate, I'm willing to believe now, had been prodding us all that morning. It made us take a certain timber road when we almost chose another. It threatened rain that never came, and forced us to load the truck and start homeward early. At the final instant, as we wound through the high valley, it sent a single shaft of sunlight down through the crowding forest. That ray of light fell directly upon the small white object just ahead, making it stand out brilliantly against the shadowed mountainside. It was startling, and uncanny.

Bob, our woodsman friend who was driving the truck, grunted and put pressure on the brakes. The truck began to slow down. I told myself the white object couldn't possibly be anything but a piece of paper. Then, with a shock, I realized it was moving.

"Why, it's a bird!" said young Zan, my son. "It's a dove—a white dove! But what's it doing here?"

"Dunno," Bob mumbled. Carefully, quietly, he eased the truck to a stop. "Never saw nothin' like that in this country. Hit shore don't belong here."

We had come upon a variety of wildlife that morning, which was one of the reasons Zan and I always looked forward to our October trips with Bob. October is wood-gathering time in the Carolina highlands, and we were returning with our first load of logs for the fireplace. Behind us in the gold and crimson forest there had been breathtaking glimpses of a world few people ever have a chance to see. But nothing we had encountered was as extraordinary as this.

We were in wild country, far from people. Here, where one expected to find grouse and deer, the sight of even a common barnyard pigeon would have been surprising. But a *white dove?*

For several seconds we sat staring at it incredulously, wondering what peculiar circumstance had brought it, or driven it, to this high and remote corner. Fifty feet ahead, and well above the narrow road, the white bird was still moving along the steep slope of the mountain, skirting a thicket at the forest's edge. It seemed to be perfectly all right, though obviously our presence was making it nervous. Momentarily I expected it to spread its wings and take off.

Suddenly Zan whispered tensely, “Let me out! I’m going to catch it!”

“Don’t be silly,” I told him and started to explain the impossibility of catching anything winged with only one’s bare hands. Difficult enough in an enclosure, in the open it is practically impossible. But before I could give him the benefit of my hard-earned wisdom, he was out of the truck and swiftly crossing the road.

“All he needs,” Bob said dryly, “is a little salt to put on its tail.”

We watched Zan scramble up the slope. The dove, instead of flying away as he approached, neatly sidestepped and darted into the thicket. Zan plunged in after it.

At thirteen the boy was a lean, wiry, and intense person, but not especially quick. At least I had never thought so. In fact, I considered him rather bumbling. But suddenly Bob gasped, and I saw Zan straighten, carefully holding something white in his hands. So much for my experience and wisdom! The impossible had been accomplished. I thought it was just luck at the time. In the coming months I was to change my mind.

Anyway, that was the second miracle. The third was not to happen until late that afternoon.

On the way home we examined the bird and found nothing wrong with its wings. Its tail feathers, however, were bedraggled and worn.

“That means,” said Bob, “that it’s done a heap of walking. But since its wings are all right, I figger it’s just plum’ tired out from flying. An’ it could be that a hawk gave it a bad time. Shore must have come from a long ways off.”

At home, the immediate question was what to do with the dove now that we had it. It was a beautiful creature, and Alice, my wife, exclaimed over it with delight. Then sadly she reminded us that we had neither an aviary nor a dovecote, but that we did have cats.

“But, Mom,” Zan wailed, “I caught it, and I sure want to keep it. Can’t I?”

“We’ll decide that later,” she told him. “Right now, put it in a place where it will be absolutely safe. Then help Bob and your father finish with the wood.”

We found a sturdy packing crate in the garage and turned it into a temporary cage, with a piece of heavy wire secured over the top. I was sure it would resist attack from any predator.

Bob drove us back to the high forest. Again we loaded the truck and returned to the lower valley and home. By the time we had finished stacking our fireplace logs in a corner of the yard, the sun was poised over the gap to the west of us. Wearily we went into the studio to have coffee and relax.

The studio, where I alternately produce books and pictures, is a big room with a broad sweep of windows that look out over a walled terrace. I had momentarily forgotten Zan’s dove when a flash of white outside caught my eye. At the same moment Alice cried, “The dove’s escaped! There it goes!” And there it went—straight past the windows, flying so close that we could see it looking in at us. It vanished somewhere on the other side of the house, in the area of the garden.

To Zan, who looked a little sick at his loss, I said, “You caught it once. If you hurry, maybe you can do it again.”

In an instant he dashed through the kitchen and raced outside. I didn’t really believe he could catch the bird a second time. The odds against it seemed far too great. But I had hardly reached the kitchen when he came panting back into the

house. Again the impossible had happened. He had the dove in his hands.

The third miracle? No, the fourth.

The third miracle had already happened. When we went into the garage and lifted the cover from the cage, the first white dove was still there. Zan had caught the bird's mate, for we now discovered that it had a small crest on its head, showing it to be a male.

The big question is, How did the second white dove know where to find its mate?

2

A PERSONAL POWER

I WILL NEVER FORGET my feeling of blank astonishment when we opened the cage and found that the first dove was still inside. Following it came a growing wonder.

How *had* the second dove known where to come?

Had it seen Zan capture its mate, then followed the truck to where we live?

I thought back carefully and knew it couldn't have happened that way. I am a fairly good observer, and so is Zan, and we are always on the watch for what may be around us in the mountains. As for Bob, he is an experienced woodsman and hunting guide, and his sharp blue eyes miss nothing. In fact, his vision is remarkable, for I have actually watched him shoot an ordinary piece of string in two at thirty yards with Zan's little .22-caliber rifle. That string, by the way, was thinner than the head of a pin, and he did not use a telescopic sight. Now a white object stands out clearly in the fall woods, and down in the open lower valley where we live it can be seen for a great distance. So I am absolutely certain that one of us, especially Bob, would have spotted the second dove had it been anywhere around.

That dove was not around. It did not appear until more than four hours after we had put the first dove in its cage. When it came, it appeared very suddenly, apparently sweeping down from the sky—and flew directly past the studio windows, close, as if to attract our attention. It even turned its head and looked at us as it went by. Then it flew on and landed in the garden, where Zan was able to catch it almost immediately.

Several things about this seemed remarkable. The more I thought about it, the more remarkable the whole thing became. It almost seemed that the dove *wanted* to be caught—by the right person, that is. Perhaps the most remarkable part of all was the exact pinpointing of its mate's location in such a vast area.

In the four hours before it arrived, the second white dove could have flown more than a hundred miles. But suppose the bird had been closer than that and needed to travel only a fraction of that distance. How did it know the proper direction to take? Perhaps it made only a good guess—but if so, how did it know the exact place to stop?

Could telepathy have had anything to do with it?

For a while I thought that explained the happening. But doubts came. There were far too many questions to be answered that way.

If not telepathy, what was it that brought the second dove to my studio window?

Instinct?

Something in me rebelled at the word. I have seen too many curious things in nature to have much regard for such an explanation. Instinct is one of the most overworked and misused nouns in our language, and it is always being slipped in somewhere to hide an ocean of ignorance.

Intuition seemed a much better word. Everyone is intuitive to a certain extent, though very few people could ever hope to match the second dove's performance. It aroused in me a great curiosity. Was the bird a freak, or were other creatures able to do the same thing? If they could, the world of nature was not at all the way I had always supposed it to be.

I have never seen a happier pair of birds than those two after we put the second dove in the cage with the first. They billed and cooed like long-lost lovers and did not seem to mind in the least the smallness of their box. Zan, of course, wanted to keep them, and so did I. But winter was approaching; there was the problem of building a safe and adequate dovecote, and on top of that there was the possibility that someone might come at any time and claim them. Anyway, we had cats.

Where did the doves come from? Despite all our efforts, we were unable to find out. A few people in the farming areas had pigeons, but a white dove was a curiosity. Finally we decided that after the birds had plenty of rest and food, we would turn them loose in a safe spot. Since they had managed to find each other, surely they would be able to fly back to their original home.

So one morning, as soon as Zan was off to school, Alice and I took the doves across the meadow behind the house and left them by a logger's shack at the edge of the woods. Since they had been caged for a week, I didn't expect them to fly off immediately. They would need a little while to get their bearings and become accustomed to being free. In the meantime the open shack would give them shelter.

Through the day we checked on them with the field glasses, but at sundown they were still there.

"What's the matter with them?" Alice asked worriedly. "Why don't they leave?"

"Maybe they like it there," I told her.

"But they can't stay—not on the ground like that! Something's bound to get them!"

I was worried too. Besides having its share of foxes, our valley has wildcats as well as other predators.

But the doves were still near the shack the next morning, unharmed. Nor did they make any attempt to leave that day.

As the sun dipped low again, Alice said, "We'll just have to catch them and put them back in the cage. They'll never last out there another night."

That evening Zan happened to be away somewhere with the school band, so we tried to catch the doves ourselves. They cooed a greeting at our approach and allowed Alice, who has a way with birds and animals, to come very close—but not quite close enough. I could not even get near them. With the coming of darkness we were forced to give up.

We slept badly that night. When the morning mists had cleared, we looked for

the doves. Miraculously, they were still there.

When Zan returned from school, we hurried to the shack. He caught both doves in a matter of seconds, scooping up one with his left hand and the other with his right.

I was flabbergasted.

What sort of power did he have over them?

3

THE TWENTY-FIVE RACCOONS

THE GAME WARDEN for our area, who lives farther down the valley, was finally able to find a good home for the doves with a distant friend who was something of a naturalist.

As for the small mysteries concerning them, I have often thought that the first dove was stolen and carried some distance in a car, from which it escaped. Possibly its mate was unable to locate it until it stopped moving and reached the stationary point of our home. But no matter. Our heads were reeling with bigger mysteries.

I thought of the many stories of wild geese I had been told by hunters and woodsmen. Geese, according to most of those tales, will always find a wounded mate, no matter how far away it may be taken from the place where it was caught. Certainly I know of a number of actual cases that would seem to confirm this observation. The question is, How does one bird manage to locate the other?

"Oh, it's just instinct," I was always told. A truly remarkable thing, instinct.

Every creature capable of feeling and emotion, be it a worried gander or a worried human, has much the same instinctive reaction in the face of a tragedy that suddenly separates it from its mate. All else is forgotten while it searches. But there has to be more than instinct at work when the search takes it directly to the lost one.

As far as geese are concerned, I'm sure their remarkable eyesight and hearing would explain many of the stories I had heard. But not all.

Suddenly I remembered my experience with the seventeen squirrels.

Once, when I was living in a small stone house in an Illinois town, a very friendly gray squirrel began accepting handouts in the form of pecans. He was so quiveringly fond of those pecans, and so unselfish about them, that he couldn't keep the good news to himself. One memorable afternoon he brought his friends. The first was a timid little fellow who barely found the courage to take the proffered nut from my hand. As he scampered away, another squirrel, seeing that no harm had come to the first, came forward for a handout. Behind him appeared another, and another, and another.…

Yes, seventeen different squirrels gathered in the yard and came one by one up the steps to receive an offering. The question is, How did the friendly squirrel tell the others about the big deal with the pecans? Did he chatter loudly in squirrel language, saying, "Hey, there's a soft touch over at the old stone house! The guy has more pecans than sense. Come on, fellers, I'll introduce you to him!"

Maybe it was something like that. I know there are chatter signals that

squirrels use to inform one another about food. However, seventeen squirrels are a lot of squirrels, and hardly more than half of them could have lived within chatter distance of my house. Did the friendly squirrel go all around town and round up hungry acquaintances?

I suddenly remembered another unusual experience.

At that time I had another studio home on a stretch of Florida coast that abounded with wildlife. In front of the house a panther regularly patrolled the water's edge at low tide, and behind it a wildcat lived in the palmettoes, not too far from a family of raccoons. Birds were everywhere. The marshes on either side were full of clacking rails, and in the mornings the edging mangroves would be covered with egrets, looking for all the world like great white blossoms that had opened during the night. Our daily visitors included an eagle, several ospreys, herons of all kinds, and ibis—great flocks of wood ibis that would do precision cartwheels high overhead, often for most of a morning.

In this semitropic abundance, Zan's favorites were the raccoons. He tried to tame Mama Coon by leaving scraps of food out for her every evening. But not until he discovered her taste for sweet rolls and doughnuts did she finally overcome her shyness, and begin appearing at the screen door at suppertime with her family, now grown. If we were a trifle late with the bakery sweets, Mama Coon would summon us by seizing the edge of the door and banging it impatiently against the framing.

Presently we discovered that we were feeding, not three raccoons, but five. Soon there were ten. And such was the amazing popularity of bakery sweets—leftovers that I began hauling by the bushel from every bakery in the region—that the ten raccoons soon became twenty, and finally thirty. At least I counted thirty one evening, though Alice says there were only twenty-five. And twenty-five were quite enough. The sight of that much wild fur swirling about the patio in the early darkness can never be forgotten.

The big puzzler, naturally, is how all those masked marauders so quickly got the word that ambrosian goodies were being passed out in quantity—and in safety, which is very important—at a certain location on the coast.

I wondered about it at the time, but on the seacoast there is so much to arouse wonder that many things have to go unexplained, so I accepted the presence of the raccoons, just as I accepted the curious actions of certain birds and fish. After our experience with the doves, however, the old questions rose again.

Just how did Mama Coon impart the news to the others?

There is hardly any doubt that the information came from her. Nor is it hard to imagine Mama and her family heading along one of the marsh trails one evening and being stopped by Cousin Nosey, who chitters curiously, "Hey, I see you going in this direction every night! What's cooking?"

And Mama, recognizing kin, would no doubt tell him to tag along and find out. All this is possible, for I have often watched coons meet and chitter at each other. Usually it seemed to be only a friendly warning, like, "You keep your distance, and I'll keep mine," though I have a strong feeling that at times certain basic news items were exchanged. Even so, such encounters would not account for more than a dozen of my patio visitors. They could not explain the many raccoons who came from a distance to join the feast.

I am certain that they must have come from a distance, because they were

inlanders, entirely different from the marsh variety of raccoons that lived around us. Mama Coon and her family were smallish brown animals with sharp, foxy faces. These inlanders were often twice her size—big, handsome gray rascals with broad heads and gleaming silvery fur that would have made a trapper's eyes pop.

On the Gulf Coast a raccoon doesn't have to travel far to eat his fill. Every ebbing tide leaves a bountiful feast. The pickings are just as good for the inlanders, for there's a year-round growing season. So it is not surprising that all our patio visitors had a well-fed look. Some of the inlanders were downright fat.

The astonishing thing is that well-fed raccoons would travel deep into strange territory for food they didn't need.

The only way I can explain it is that some receiving portion of their minds picked up, from a distance, three alluring bits of information from Mama Coon. Not that Mama intended to broadcast it to all the world. More likely her joy was so great that she couldn't contain it.

The three bits of information were simply these: (1) an absolutely out-of-this-world kind of goodie was being given to all members of the Masked Brotherhood who called at Marshy Point; (2) there was plenty of it every evening for everyone; and (3) Marshy Point, glory be, was a safe place to dine.

It would have taken something like that to entice a well-fed raccoon so far. And, knowing man for the murderous wretch he is, they would never have accepted personal handouts from the creature without the assurance that there would be no treachery. Even so, our big gray visitors were very wary at first, nor did they ever approach as close as the other raccoons who lived near us.

As I considered that raccoon experience, I felt that I had taken a definite step into the unknown, on the track of something strange.

A dog named Turk gave me even more to think about.…

4

WILD DOG

My neighbor the beekeeper lives alone down the valley in an old weather-beaten cottage on the mountainside. He is not really alone, for, besides his bees, he has a host of friends in the branches overhead and in the forest behind him. With most of them—the cardinals, the chickadees, assorted songsters, and one trusting doe—he is on close speaking terms. If he has any real hate in him, it is reserved for two kinds of creatures only—deer hunters and wild dogs.

When I told him about the raccoons, he did not seem surprised. "News gets around in the woods," he said quietly.

"How?" I asked.

He shrugged. "Don't ask me how. It just gets around. Those raccoons prove it. An' it's the same with the deer. If a hunter's on the prowl, they'll know it. If I put out a fresh block of salt for the doe, they'll know that too. It's a queer thing."

I was tempted to tell him about Turk, for I wanted his opinion on the matter. But I decided it would be better if I didn't. On the subject of wild dogs he can become grim indeed. "If you ever saw one of those devils catch a doe with a fawn …," he muttered once, shaking his head.

I have seen wild dogs at work, and I hate them too. So does everyone in the valley. But Turk was different. Most dogs that go wild in the mountains run in packs, and they have homes of sorts they can return to on occasion. Turk had no home. He was a loner, and he had no use for man. But he did like Alice.

All animals like Alice. Maybe, unconsciously, she sends out waves of love for four-footed things, to which they cannot help responding. If there is a stray cat in the valley, it always finds her. I have lost count of the number of stray or abandoned dogs that have come to her to be fed and helped.

Naturally, it was she who saw Turk first and called my attention to him. He was about fifty yards upstream from the house, motionless on the bank of the creek that rushes down past the studio. The fearless and yet calculating way he stood looking back at us made me think of a wolf. He was about the size of a wolf, but he had the short yellow hair of a dingo, and the same broad, flat head and powerful shoulders.

Alice placed food out near the terrace wall for him, but he refused to come close until we had gone back into the house. We were feeding two other dogs at the time, and when both arrived unexpectedly at the eating area, I was sure there would be trouble. There wasn't. Turk merely glanced at them, gave the faintest of growls, and they instantly knuckled under like a pair of cowed privates before a general.

The next day he wagged his tail happily at Alice and permitted her to pet him, but ten feet was as close as he would allow me to come. At that distance he would look at me hard and, though he made no sound, his lip would curl ever so slightly. He seemed to say, *Keep away from me, and I'll not bother you.*

The message was absolutely clear. If I had been stupid enough to miss it, the little chill that went up my back would have set me straight in an instant. He was willing to tolerate me because of Alice, but I must stay well away and never attempt to touch him.

Wild animals have given me warnings before, but this was the first time one had ever made me *feel* his thoughts. I was soon to learn that Turk was capable of much greater mental feats. In the next few days he taught me a lesson I shall never forget, and at the same time he cleared up a mystery that had been nagging at me for years.

It had happened back on the coast before we came to the mountains. In a small palm grove beyond our place, a neighbor had placed a pair of goats to graze, tying each with a long rope to keep it from wandering away. One afternoon Alice and I went out to the station wagon, intending to ride into town for our mail. Before we could open the doors, one of the goats suddenly appeared. It rushed up to Alice, stared hard into her face, then whirled around to me and did the same thing.

I couldn't understand, and neither could Alice. Puzzled, we opened the doors and started to get into the wagon, but the goat jumped in ahead of us. I pulled him out, and we got in quickly and closed the doors, but when we started to drive off, the stubborn goat planted himself directly in front of the car and refused to budge.

"What's the matter with the crazy thing?" I muttered.

"It's not crazy," said Alice. "And it's not stupid."

Goats are definitely not stupid, as I knew from experience. I remembered the goat Louis Bromfield told about, when writing of his farm. It was always managing to reach the opposite side of a fence that was much too high to jump. The truth gave everyone something to think about. The goat had formed a partnership with a donkey. By standing on the donkey's back, it could leap the fence with ease.

Worriedly we got out of the wagon, wondering what was wrong. The goat looked at us again, gave an entreating little "Ba-a-a!" and began hastening down the lane with the two of us following.

When we reached the palm grove where it had been tied, we found the other goat unconscious on the ground. It was being strangled by its line, which had become looped tightly around its neck. Had we reached it a few minutes later, it would have been dead.

I don't know how the first goat, in a desperate effort to save his companion, ever managed to break his own line in order to go for help, and I shudder to think how slow we were to comprehend. It was a profoundly moving experience, and I shall never forget how hard he looked into our faces, silently trying to tell us something that any other animal would have understood.

Not, of course, until I met Turk did I begin to realize that the goat was trying to tell us something in nature's language, and became almost frantic when we failed to understand it. Naturally he went to Alice first because where animals

are concerned, she is what might be called *simpático.*

Simpático is a Spanish word that means a great deal more than just sympathetic, as it is usually translated. If others find you *simpático,* they feel in you an unusual understanding, a sort of closeness and kinship that is far beyond the ordinary.

It had brought the goat straight to Alice without hesitation, and it brought Turk also—after he had sized me up and decided he could handle me. When he told me to keep my distance, he looked straight into my eyes, exactly as the goat had done long before. But Turk's message was a threat, the simplest and strongest message that can be conveyed to a dull-witted human. Several days later Turk looked at me again, using that same hard, peculiar stare. But this time he wasn't giving information. He was getting it.

Here is the reason: Bob, our woodsman friend, stopped by one afternoon and saw Alice feeding Turk. He was fascinated. "What a dog!" he whispered. "I'd sure like to have him." He added, "I've seen that feller before, chasin' deer. He's a wild 'un. If the warden ever gets a shot at 'im …"

Turk had become a worry. The cats were afraid of him. So were the other dogs. Furthermore, our part of the valley is a deer crossing, a fact that Turk knew only too well. Our game warden was always on the watch for deer killers and had disposed of several of them in sight of the house. Obviously, if Turk hung around very long, he was in for trouble.

We talked it over. It seemed much better for Bob to have Turk and train him, than for the dog to run afoul of the warden. But how were we to catch him?

Bob solved it by appearing every afternoon so that Turk would become accustomed to him. Alice, somewhat against her will, agreed to snap a leash on Turk at the right moment and give him to Bob.

An afternoon came when all seemed to be in order. Turk was used to Bob and allowed us to approach within thirty feet of him while Alice fed him. Then I made the mistake of asking Bob how he intended to train such a dog.

"Why, I reckon I'll do it jest like I always do it," he said. "You gotta let 'im know who's boss."

Into my mind at that instant came a sharp vision of Bob's little mountain farm, with a pair of woebegone hounds tied to a tree near the house. Bob had a fine reputation as a trainer of hunting dogs, but like most men in the region he believed in using an iron hand to achieve results. Suddenly I could see Turk tied like the hounds but, unlike them, refusing to submit, and refusing all food in his utter hatred of confinement.

As the vision became unpleasantly clear in my mind, I saw Turk staring at me, his brown agate eyes boring deep into mine. Then he looked intently at Bob. All at once he backed away from Alice, whirled around, and trotted swiftly up the creek. At the spot where we had first noticed him, he paused briefly and glanced back.

He seemed to say, "No one shall confine me. No one. I am free. Or don't you know what freedom is?"

That, as nearly as I can express it, is the thought that came to me at that moment. He turned and trotted out of sight upstream. We never saw him again.

The more I thought about it afterward, the more certain I became that he knew Bob's intention from the first. The only reason he remained near us till the last

possible moment was his feeling for Alice. She was *simpático*—probably the only creature in his life who was.

5

INSECTS HAVE FEELINGS?

THOUGH I WAS CAREFUL not to mention Turk to the beekeeper, I tried to draw him out on other matters that might help in my search for answers. He has a surprising knowledge of the wild world around us, and much of it is not to be found in books. Also, I suspected he was aware of secrets I would find quite startling if I could get him to talk. But prying a truth out of him isn't easy.

"Do you think dogs can read minds?" I asked.

"Why not?" he answered. "Other things do."

"What other things?"

"Look around," he said. "You'd be surprised. There are all sorts of goings-on right under people's noses, but mighty few of us ever notice 'em. You know why? It's because most of us think we're better'n anything else, and smarter. But we're not."

"You don't think humans are superior to other creatures?"

"Pshaw! Everything that lives is superior in some way to everything else. Doesn't that make us all sort of equal?"

"It's a good point to remember," I admitted.

"Well, you've got to approach animals as an equal before you can become acquainted with them or learn much about them. Anyway, we make an awful poor showing when compared to some creatures. You've read about dolphins?"

I told him I had. I had been staggered to learn that dolphins not only have a highly developed language, but a memory that puts ours in the shade, and a brain that works many times faster than a human's.

"Then there's the wolf," he said. "Stack him up against us, and he comes out way ahead. He's a better animal all the way around, and a finer gentleman."

I have met only one wolf in my life, but the meeting was memorable. We came upon each other suddenly at the corner of a northern field, and we both stopped short and stared at each other. At that moment, while I was blinking and trying to tell myself I was seeing a stray dog and not a wolf, he instantly sized me up as being utterly harmless and practically beneath contempt. He went calmly on his way and disappeared into the growth at the side of the field, not even bothering to glance back at me.

At the time I did not know how he felt about me. But I'll never forget the look he gave me. It was exactly the same hard and penetrating stare that came from Turk.

If the wolf hadn't known I was harmless, he would have looked back to see what I was going to do. Moreover, if I had had a gun in my hand at the time and

had been in a hunting mood, I doubt that I would have seen him at all. He would have known I was dangerous long before he came near me, and he would have been careful to avoid me.

The beekeeper's views are shared by many thoughtful people. In fact, it is almost impossible for us to grasp the truth about other creatures as long as we consider ourselves far above them. We must come humbly down to another level and meet them as equals. And we must realize that every one of them, be it a dolphin, wolf, crow, or even a grasshopper, is an individual and actually superior to us in some way.

As an individual, every animal is another living being on the same spaceship as ourselves, traveling toward the same unknown destination. Like us, it is equipped with special talents, a means of communication with other life around it, and a complete set of feelings. It knows joy and fear, love and hate, anxiety and grief, pride, yes, and even compassion.

Insects have feelings? Certainly they have! Who has never been stung by an angry wasp or an anxious bee? Who has never watched a happy fly circling in the sun? As for language, a grasshopper has a vocabulary of nearly five hundred different chirping sounds. Just because he makes them by rubbing a leg against a wing, instead of wagging a tongue, does not lessen their significance as a means of communication.

I don't know whether the housefly has his own special sound language, as most creatures seem to have, but he doesn't really need one. He is a very sensitive little fellow. And like Turk and the wolf, all the cats and dogs I have known, and innumerable other creatures who have looked hard into my eyes to discover what message lurked behind them, he is quite capable of picking up my thoughts.

Anyone who has trouble believing this can try stalking a fly with murder in his mind and a swatter in his hand. Watch carefully how the fly acts. Better yet, one can find a copy of J. Allen Boone's curious book *Kinship with All Life* and learn some amazing truths he will never forget. The chances are that he will never want to swat another fly.

Allen Boone, a well-known Hollywood figure and friend of animals, was the man who tutored Strong-heart, probably the most intelligent of all the great movie dogs. Early in their relationship Boone discovered that Strongheart could read his mind. This fact not only accounted for the dog's uncanny acting ability, but it was the undoing of many a crook, for he would not tolerate a dishonest person in his presence.

Boone soon learned what primitive man learned ages ago—that *all* creatures have the ability to read the thoughts of those around them. It is almost as necessary for their safety as their sense of smell. Some, like Strongheart, Turk, and my wolf, have this ability to a much higher degree than others. But all creatures have it, even mosquitoes and houseflies.

After Allen Boone discovered this, he actually made a fly his friend and trained it to come to his call and alight on his finger!

How did he manage it? By forgetting his supposed superiority and meeting the fly as an equal!

This is a good place to remember Albert Schweitzer, medical missionary and one of the world's greatest thinkers. He had a feeling for insects that was as

remarkable as Boone's. In Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy, all life is related and closely bound together, and he did not believe in killing anything, not even a mosquito.

That idea rather shook me at first, for at the time when I read the doctor's work I was being thoroughly bitten by mosquitoes. During my angry slapping, most of Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy went in through one eye and out the other. Soon I learned that a bright mosquito can pick up a swatter's thoughts and actually outwit him! So, much against my will, I was forced to respect the rascal.

Even so, it took some doing before I could accept Dr. Schweitzer's point of view. Acceptance came in time, as my understanding grew, and with it my feeling of human superiority took a tumble. It tumbled even more after Zan caught the doves and we began asking questions that were hard to answer.

One of the first things I stumbled over—and it is one of those incredible truths which has been right under my nose all my life—is how completely we have lost contact with the natural world around us.

That is a frightening fact, for it could mean death for all of us.

6

THE TERRIBLE INTENT

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED why some people can walk through the woods and see all kinds of wildlife, whereas others see nothing?

The answer to that is something I learned while trying to solve the mystery of the doves. We have lost all contact with that great natural world beyond our doors. In fact, we are so far out of step with it, so destructive and uncaring, that we seem like insensitive invaders from another planet.

When you enter a wild area, all life around you is very much aware of how you feel about it. The way you feel decides how much of that life you see.

Suppose you are out hunting and are all fired up about bringing home your share of the game. The chances are that you will see very little game close enough to shoot. With every step forward you are broadcasting the fact that your intentions are deadly.

Just being a human is bad enough. The experience of centuries has taught wildlife that you cannot be trusted and that you are better avoided. And when you become a killer on the loose, every creature wants to hide.

Indian hunters of old knew that their deadly intentions could be felt by the game they stalked. But they *had* to kill for food, so they were careful to turn their thoughts to something else while they crept forward into shooting range. A Cherokee even offered a little prayer just before he shot, begging the creature's forgiveness for taking its life.

Now, suppose you are out hunting and suddenly change your point of view.

My cousin had that experience while hunting deer in Colorado. In the beginning he and a friend tramped many miles through the mountains, and the only deer they saw were a few in the distance, swiftly retreating. Then the hunters became lost, and for several heartbreaking days they struggled through the wilderness, trying to find a way out. Now they saw deer, dozens of deer. Many of them were only a stone's throw away, and this in spite of the fact that both hunters were still carrying their rifles in plain sight. But by that time neither man had the least interest in killing anything. They were exhausted and frightened, and all they wanted was to get home.

When man is in trouble, the creatures around him know it, and the list of those which have been of help is endless. In their book, *The Strange World of Animals and Pets,* Vincent and Margaret Gaddis give many instances of animals, and even birds, coming to the assistance of humans in need. This, of course, will be no surprise to anyone with a cat or a dog. These animals know instantly when something is wrong. If they are unable to right it, they can pour out sympathy in

unlimited quantities.

There is another kind of hunter, who never carries a weapon, who always sees the wildlife around him. He goes forth to discover and admire, not to kill. And since all living things, even plants, like to be loved and told how wonderful they are, they are not reluctant about showing themselves when this person comes along.

Most hunters of this kind are naturalists. By that I mean *amateur* naturalists, people who would not dream of destroying a creature so it could be stuffed for a museum. Many of them, if they discovered something very rare, wouldn't tell even their best friends about it for fear the news would spread and tragedy result. As a rule these people are loners, and when they go forth to see what they can see, the world of nature usually meets them more than halfway. Sometimes it practically snows them under.

In one of his outdoor books, Edwin Way Teale tells of a friend who is always surrounded by a cloud of birds every time she goes walking in her woods. They alight on her hands, head, arms and shoulders until they no longer have standing room. Other nature writers tell of similar cases, and they are by no means as rare as you would think. One, of course, is my neighbor the beekeeper. I have never seen him without a considerable chorus of feathered companionship, though most of his friends fly away at my approach. Another such case was my great-uncle, a ripsnorting old rascal who was never quite tamed even in his final days. But the birds, as well as the small animals around his farm, thought he was great. When he became too ancient to stir far from the rocking chair on his porch, the birds would come to him. They would settle all around him, and take turns singing!

And there was the last keeper of St. Marks Light, down on the Gulf. I had heard that he had a very special way with wild geese, so I went there once with a photographer, hoping to get pictures for a magazine article about him. A number of people have managed to get on speaking terms with wild geese, but it has always been done within the confines of a well-protected sanctuary. As far as I know, the keeper of St. Marks Light was the only man who could stand in the open and actually have wild geese come to his call. They would appear as if from nowhere, swoop down from the sky, circle close around him, and feed from his hand. He loved those geese, and the geese loved him—but we never managed to get good pictures of man and birds together, not even with a telephoto lens! If the photographer and I crept closer than a quarter of a mile, those wary geese would take off as if we were contaminated!

To us they were merely the subject for a magazine article that would put money in our pockets. All we wanted was to get the job done and collect for our efforts. But those contrary geese would not cooperate! We were furious. Those crazy, ding-ratted, blankety-blank birds! We could have wrung their necks.

Our feelings about them were just the opposite of those of the lighthouse keeper, so the geese simply did not care for our company.

On the other hand, crows have never cared for my company either, but instead of shunning me as the geese did, they always took another approach. When I lived in the Midwest, where I met so many squirrels, I used to go hiking daily, and would often be followed by a great flock of derisive crows, telling me how little they thought of me.

If you have never been told off and put in your place by a flock of crows, you have no idea how most wild creatures feel about humans. Usually the wild is voiceless when man is around, but a crow always has something to say. Furthermore he has a terrific vocabulary and can give full expression to his feelings. It has been years since I crossed an Illinois cornfield with a raucous escort of some fifty cawing, haw-hawing black demons, but my ears still burn with the things they said.

Since they are shot at continually in the corn country, crows can be pardoned for having a low opinion of man, and for being loudly outspoken when they have the chance. Their big chance, of course, comes when they can catch someone like me abroad without a gun. When it happened, I used to think I was being personally singled out for abuse. Now I realize it was just the wild talking back to all mankind.

But such language!

7

A GRIEVING SNAKE

WE HUMANS are very proud of our ability to reason, but with the arrival of the doves it soon became obvious to me that pure reason is of far less importance in the world of nature than some other qualities. Reason alone, of course, would never have brought the second dove to the first. Only an intuitive feeling did that. An intuition—which is another name for ESP—seems to be rooted deep in the emotions.

Do wild creatures actually have the same type of emotions as humans?

They do, and it comes as a real shock even to experienced woodsmen when they suddenly discover this fact. John Kulish, a trapper for many years, tells in his book *Bobcats Before Breakfast* how his entire view of wildlife changed after he came upon the grieving mate of an otter he had killed. No human could have felt a greater desolation. No one knows how a wild goose feels when it loses its mate, but I can find no record of one ever taking another mate when the first is lost. Many an amateur naturalist, moreover, has seen a songbird go into a state of quivering shock when its mate has a sudden accident and then spring up bursting with joy when the other bird revives.

To lose a mate is one thing, but what about the loss of a friend? There are friendships among animals as strong as any found among humans, as every racehorse owner knows. When a horse forms such an attachment—it may be with almost any creature from a dog to a donkey—the friend travels with the horse, or no races are won that day. If the friend dies, it may be a long time before the horse even attempts to race again. In one case I know, where the lost friend was a little donkey, the horse stopped racing entirely.

But what of the lower forms of life?

"Snakes have feelings too," my uncle told me. "I know two very unusual stories about them that will prove it. Most people may find them hard to believe, but I assure you they are true. One happened to me, and the other to a young neighbor girl."

My uncle's first story is one I'll never forget. When he was a young man in Florida, clearing some land for a garden, he was digging out a stump when it suddenly broke open. The hollow interior, he discovered, was the home of a pair of smallish brown snakes. They happened to be the brown variety of the king snake, although he didn't know that at the time—nor did they look small at first glance. They seemed perfectly huge. The brown variety of the king snake has markings somewhat like a rattler's, and my uncle, who fears no man, can be pardoned for being frightened. His first reaction was to swing his mattock and

try to kill both snakes. Unfortunately he killed only one.

I say unfortunately because it would have been better if the second snake had died with the first. But it escaped unharmed, and from that day on it began to haunt him.

That little, harmless brown snake, one of man's best friends, watched for my uncle and followed him whenever he left the house. Often, when he was at work somewhere about the place, he would turn suddenly and see the snake only a few yards away, eyeing him steadily. Time after time, when he was sitting on his porch, he glimpsed it testing the screen wire, searching for a way to get inside.

A man with a pair of king snakes living on his property can count himself lucky, for they are better mousers than cats, and poisonous snakes seldom live long around them. My uncle had done a terrible thing, and now a friend had become an enemy.

My uncle was sorry, but in the beginning he was not greatly disturbed. Surely, he thought, the creature would tire of this silly stalking game and go away.

But the little brown snake didn't leave. Day after day, week after week, it continued to haunt him. He had destroyed its home and killed its mate, and it sought revenge with the only weapon it had that might succeed against a man.

Every animal is instantly aware of fear in another, and there can be no question but that the snake knew the exact state of my uncle's nerves from one morning to the next. By now he was in a very jumpy condition, and getting worse daily. Something had to be done.

My uncle tried every means he could think of to kill the creature. Each time he failed. King snakes are very quick and intelligent, and this one always outwitted him. The haunting continued.

Desperate, my uncle finally won the strange duel by leaving a weapon of some kind in every handy place he could think of. One day the little snake got too close, and my uncle was able to snatch up a hidden hoe and put an end to it. But he was never happy about his victory, and even now the memory of it still haunts him.

My uncle's second story is entirely different, and because of Zan and the doves it deserves some thought. A neighbor, young Paula, had a pet snake. This pet was a wild snake that lived in the adjoining meadow. It was a secret from her parents, who would have been horrified, had they known of it, and surely would have killed it. But Paula, far from being horrified, must have felt only the greatest admiration and delight when she first saw it, or they could never have become acquainted. Evidently the snake knew instantly how she felt and responded with the same kind of feeling, for they became fast friends. Whenever she slipped into the meadow to play, Paula would call her friend by tapping on a spoon with a pebble. The snake always came to her signal.

My uncle did not know whether Paula's friend was a harmless variety of snake or one of the dreaded rattlers. But as long as it was her friend, she was safe even with the most vicious diamondback. They are gentlemen. They strike only for food or in defense, and they will not abuse a trust. To the person with that rare ability to understand them, they are capable of a wealth of feeling and affection.

Grace Wiley, a herpetologist of California, happened to be such a person. She collected poisonous snakes of all kinds, and in the past many people have watched her—from behind the safety of a glass door—"gentle" some of the most

vicious and deadly snakes on earth. She usually accomplished this miracle in a very short time, the only sounds being the incredulous gasps from those privileged to witness the performance.

She would sit quietly in the corner of a small, bare room which contained only her chair and a sturdy table. From the moment the wild, caged specimen was loosed upon the table, Miss Wiley would begin silently beaming her thoughts upon it—thoughts of deep admiration and affection and respect. Gradually the creature's fury and distrust would melt away. Now, seeing her as an equal instead of an enemy, an equal offering trust and friendship, it would offer the same by permitting her to pet it with a padded stick. Soon the stick would be laid aside, and Grace Wiley would be at the table, for she had made a friend.

Other people, including J. Allen Boone, have used Grace Wiley's approach to "gentle" everything from killer mustangs to killer whales, and to "tame" an amazing variety of untamable creatures—houseflies, ants, fish, snails, and even microbes. In no case, however, is any actual "taming" done. The approach is always made by an equal to an equal, and nothing is forced. Following admiration, there is simply that silent appeal for an exchange of love and understanding and friendship. From nature, you always receive what you give.

The highest emotion, surely, is love. If no snake, or even a fly, is a stranger to it, then every living thing on this whirling spaceship is an individual much like ourselves, a kindred being, wondering and aware.

8

THE INVISIBLE COMPASS

WHEN I NO LONGER had any doubt that Zan's doves had managed to find each other by means of ESP, I immediately wondered if other creatures also possessed this ability. When I began exploring, I found myself opening doors that I didn't know existed.

The homing "instinct" of certain pigeons seemed a good place to begin. Was their so-called instinct really a form of ESP? Were they the only birds to have it? What about animals?

Right away I stumbled over the fact that homing pigeons simply aren't with it when it comes to finding their way back to the family roost. Carry one too far into strange territory, and if he has not been carefully trained by an expert, he is lost. There are exceptions, of course, for one intrepid homer broke all records by flying from Arras, France, to Saigon, South Vietnam, a distance of 7,200 miles! But that is the very rare pigeon. In fact, only about one pigeon in a dozen of the homer strain shows unusual ability and is able to return from long distances without too much coaching.

But with wild birds it's a different story entirely. Many of them have been tested by investigators and have been found to have strong homing ability. Outstanding is the English shearwater. Put him in a box, shut out all the light, whirl him around to make him lose his sense of direction, and release him in a foreign country hundreds of miles away, like Germany or Turkey or even North Africa, and what happens? He immediately switches on the invisible compass within his head, and forthwith sets out in the direction of the needle, which always points to home. Almost before you know it he is back, right where he started from.

The cold North Atlantic is unknown to these birds, and they never venture far out over it. An investigator took one of them all the way from the Isle of Man to Boston in a carefully closed box, and released it. The distance is 3,000 dreary, wind-howling miles, but that intrepid shearwater—may he be eternally blessed—made it home in record time!

There is no question that many birds, possibly all of them, have a definite homing ability.

Could you, if you were locked in a box you couldn't see out of and taken several hundred miles away and released in a strange forest in the dead of night—could you, in such a situation, immediately set out in the right direction for home?

Bats can. So can cats, horses, many dogs, and a host of other animals, to judge

by the evidence. Mice can do it too, if they aren't taken too far. After all, a mile to a mouse is a tremendous distance. White-footed mice, who love to play games and sing (they sound like warblers, for I have heard their tiny elfin voices in the night and watched them play a kind of ball game by rolling pecans across the floor), are highly intelligent home-loving bodies, and they are tops at finding their way back when released in strange territory.

Cats, too, are home lovers, and their ability to tell instantly the exact direction of home and to find it is incredible. The oddest experiment I ever heard of was devised by German investigators to test the homing ability of cats. Each cat was put in an opaque bag, taken on a long, roundabout drive through a city, carried into a dark laboratory, and released in the center of a labyrinth. The place had twenty-four doors opening in every direction. Over a hundred and forty cats were used in the test, and nearly every one of them emerged from the exit that lay exactly in the direction of its home!

This reminds me of a home-loving cat that the family of a friend of mine tried to give away. It was given to an uncle, who placed it securely in a bag and transported it over a winding country road to his own farm, a dozen miles away through the Florida woods. When he got there, both cat and bag were missing! Somehow the cat, in spite of being in a bag, had managed to leap and tumble out of the back of the vehicle.

Several days later someone in the family was horrified to see an animated bag moving through the woods, heading straight for the house. It was the cat who wouldn't be given away. Though he had been taken miles from home to an entirely strange area and was hampered by a bag so that it was impossible to make out directions, he knew the exact course to take, nor did he waste time trying to follow the winding road. He cut directly through woods that he had never been in before and made a beeline for home. The cat recovered from his ordeal, lived to a happy old age, and was never given away again.

Do scientists admit that birds and animals have psychic ability, and use ESP to find their way around? Well, not exactly. Scientists are very fond of that word instinct. It covers so many gaps. Blind instinct.

No scientist I know, or whose work I have read, is quite willing to admit that ESP is found in other creatures, or that it has much to do with homing or any other unusual ability.

Scientists do admit, however, that there is a great deal of animal behavior they cannot explain. Many things, they concede, are incredible and defy all the known laws of science. Certain bats, for instance, can locate and catch fish on a pitch-black night in the darkest water, a feat said to be scientifically impossible. This is said because no echoing equipment, be it the bat's own radar or one made by humans, can function below the water's surface when operated from the air. Sent from the air, both sound and electric impulses are always deflected. (You know, of course, that bats guide themselves in the dark by hearing the echo of sounds sent through the nose. This amazing radar system is so high-pitched that human ears cannot hear it. The sound waves vibrate 110,000 times per second.)

Then there are the starfish who can locate clams that have burrowed far down in the sand and hide with shells closed, leaving not the slightest trace of their presence. How do the starfish find the clams? By the same means, I'm sure, that other creatures use to locate other things necessary for their existence—gums for

wounds, medicinal roots and special foods in emergencies. This invisible compass seems to link them to a great reality far beyond the range of the ordinary senses.

It enables some animals, like Rolf, a German shepherd dog, to find lost articles that would be impossible to track down by sight or smell. Rolf, who lived on one of the Danish islands, was able to recover thousands of lost articles for people—keys, coins, wallets, glasses, rings, watches, and even objects as small as the gold fillings from teeth. It is said that the value of his finds, over a period of seven years, was more than four hundred thousand dollars.

This mysterious business of being able to locate things is, obviously, very closely related to the homing ability. The same invisible compass is used; only, instead of pointing homeward, the needle turns toward the object to be located.

Of course the idea of the invisible compass is purely imaginary, but it is entirely possible that all creatures, humans included, have a built-in mechanism that works much the same way. Surely there is something that does the job, though no one knows what it is or how it works.

There is another ability some creatures have that is even more incomprehensible. Let me tell you about a cat that saved a bakery.…

9

FORETELLERS OF DANGER

CATS ARE STRANGE CREATURES. No human has ever actually owned one, for the simple reason that it is cats who own people. If there is a cat in your house, he owns you as well as the house, and, unlike a dog, he does just as he pleases. Entirely independent, the cat is a slave to no one, though he can be downright goofy about his chosen person.

The strangest side of a cat is that he sees things we cannot see, hears things we cannot hear, and knows things that are beyond our knowing.

The most knowing of the many cats that have called our house their own is a neat little gray body who responds to the name Periwinkle. She has wisdom far beyond her years, and whenever I see her green eyes bug out at something invisible to humans, I think of the stranger who found her, a half-drowned kitten, abandoned down the valley one blustery night and brought her to us.

The stranger was Randy Grobe, a young person well known in Sarasota for helping homeless cats and dogs. Before he left, Randy told me about another cat, very much like Periwinkle in the matter of knowing things, who owned a bakery in Cincinnati.

A man by the name of Mr. Flach thought he owned the bakery, but of course he didn't. Kitty really owned it. She owned the bakery and everyone in it except Mr. Flach. He didn't care much for cats and merely tolerated her, so naturally she merely tolerated him.

The bakery was large, with a sizable staff to keep the big gas ovens in constant operation. Everyone there—except Mr. Flach—loved Kitty, and she loved them. She was a quiet cat who always minded her own business and never got in anyone's way. But one day she suddenly changed.

She went crazy. All at once she was in everybody's way. She yowled, dashed from one person to another, looked wildly at each of them, then raced like a mad thing to Mr. Flach. Yowling frantically, she dashed back through the bakery to one of the great gas ovens.

Mr. Flach realized almost instantly that Kitty was trying to tell him something. He hastened after her. There was no outward sign that anything had gone wrong, but when he examined the big oven to which she led him, he discovered to his horror that it was about to explode. A minute or two later, the bakery would have been destroyed and possibly everyone in it killed.

Needless to say, Mr. Flach became very fond of Kitty, who turned out to be one of the most loved and pampered cats in Cincinnati.

How could any creature, cat or otherwise, have known ahead of time that

something was going to happen? That is the old question. Let me tell you about Pepper.

Pepper was a family cat, a big, black, exceedingly tough tom who caused his folks a great deal of worry one summer when they decided to go away for several months. What was to be done with Pepper? He hated to travel, and he hated being caged. The last family cat, who had been sent to a boarding home for pets when we had gone away some years before, had died quickly of lonesomeness.

Pepper, however, settled the dilemma to suit himself. Two days before we were scheduled to leave, he disappeared. He did not come home the morning we left, nor did the neighbors see any sign of him during the entire three months we were gone.

We returned one afternoon in the fall. As we were unloading the car, Pepper suddenly appeared. He was fat, sleek, and sassy and obviously had enjoyed his vacation fully as much as we had ours.

The fact that Pepper was aware of the family's plans in the beginning is interesting enough. He always seemed to know what was going on. But how did he know ahead of time exactly when we would return?

I choose to think he was tuned in to the future just as the bakery cat was, and just as a host of other creatures are—birds, snakes, crabs, rodents of all kinds, and dogs beyond count—who know in advance that something is going to happen.

Typical is the curious experience of Samuel Leigh, of Miami, who fell asleep in his chair by the fireplace one night and was suddenly awakened and practically driven out of the house by his shepherd dog, Dick. It was a perfect summer night with stars bright overhead, nor was there the least sign of impending trouble anywhere. But hardly had Dick maneuvered his master out to the lawn, well away from the house, when there was an abrupt flash of lightning and a great crash that shook the ground. Evidently the bolt struck the chimney, for it shattered, and a large part of the masonry fell through the roof and smashed the chair where Samuel Leigh had been asleep only seconds before.

I have seen lightning like that come out of nowhere on a tropic night, and it is something the best weatherman on earth would have trouble predicting. Yet Samuel Leigh's shepherd dog not only knew it was coming, but he knew exactly where it was going to strike.

In 1966, just before the Russian earthquake at Tashkent, a spitz dog forced his mistress to leave the house. She had no idea what was wrong until the quake came a few minutes later, reducing the place to rubble. Another dog, a boxer, refused to let his mistress park her car in a certain spot in San Francisco. Shortly after she had driven away, a second car parked there and was crushed by a huge tree that fell on it. Similar incidents involving pets and their masters, or some member of the family, happen all the time. Whole chapters could be filled with them. A great many other incidents, such as the one involving Pepper, go largely unnoticed because they are not spectacular.

Ernest Thompson Seton, the naturalist and writer, tells of a dog he owned out West that howled and made such a fuss one day that it kept him from making the long ride into town. An Indian friend told him afterward that the dog had surely saved his life, for something terrible would have happened if he had not stayed home. Since the day of the doves I have come to believe that absolutely.

At first I thought that only a few specially gifted creatures, like the bakery cat and Samuel Leigh's dog, were tuned in to the future. Then I remembered what I had read about the birds of Krakatau, a volcanic island between Java and Sumatra. Suddenly one day all the birds left. No one could figure out why. A few hours later the island suddenly blew up, killing every living thing on it, including over 36,000 people. It was the most violent volcanic explosion in modern history.

There is no record of the island's animals. But I'm sure they knew something was going to happen, for the animals as well as the birds left the area of Mt. Pelée on Martinique before it erupted. That explosion was not so violent as Krakatau's, though it killed more people.

I lived on the Gulf Coast long enough to be brushed by a goodly number of hurricanes, each of which was preceded by a flight of frigate birds. That is the only time you will see these great flyers near the mainland.

Why? Because the storm drives them there? That's what people say, and they add, "Whenever you see frigate birds, you can bet a hurricane isn't far away."

The statement is only partly true, for a careful check shows that a frigate bird never allows himself to be driven just anywhere by a storm. He takes off long before it arrives, often in perfectly calm weather, and keeps well away from the path of the dangerous area—the part with the highest winds and rains. There is a good reason for this. Unlike other sea birds, the frigate does not have waterproof feathers. There is nothing wetter than a hurricane rain, and to be caught in one could mean death.

Another fellow that doesn't like hurricanes and tunes in to them ahead of time, is the little fiddler crab. You will see him by the thousands on every marshy beach around the Gulf. He doesn't mind the wind and rain, but an extremely high tide, prolonged by a storm, gives him the jitters. Being a land crab, he has to have a certain amount of air, and a hurricane tide can trap him in his burrow and seal him there. Therefore the moment he receives advance warning that trouble is due, he heads for high ground.

I have seen fiddler crabs cover the road to Marshy Point well ahead of a dangerous tide. Naturalist Ivan Sanderson reports seeing a great army of them heading inland from the Caribbean coast, his first indication that a hurricane was on the way.

Snakes, too, know well in advance when danger threatens, as residents of earthquake areas have learned. It can be said that they are sensitive to minute tremors in the earth that are beyond man's awareness, but I don't believe that that is the reason they swarm into the open before the land begins to shake. They have been known to save themselves this way in dry weather when there was absolutely no sign that torrential rains would come suddenly and turn the hillsides where they live into deadly quagmires of sliding mud.

Because so many creatures, man included, are able at times to make use of foreknowledge, it must be looked upon as another natural defense that has been given for survival. But how can it be explained? Is time itself quite different from what we have always thought it to be?

10

THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEYS

I HAVE LONG BEEN guilty of underestimating other creatures, even my own pets. My mistake, of course, was to judge them by rules tailored for humans. Just recently I have discovered that there are several first-rate sets of brains prowling my house on four feet, and at least one super-set. Being cats, they can act like perfect zanies on occasion, and you wouldn't think they had sense enough to come in out of the rain. But even the one I had always considered stupid can make estimates of height and distance I couldn't possibly make, and he is capable of a curious logic that is quite beyond me.

I'm sure, for instance, that he could easily find his way home if he were stolen, placed in a closed box, and taken for a hundred-mile ride before escaping. Oh, he would escape. I'm sure of it. He may be a sort of bumble-head, but he would manage it even if he had to trade in a few of his nine lives and cross a dozen mountains afterward. Other cats have done it. In fact, a great many have done it, and some of them have traveled many hundreds of miles to get back to a home or a family they loved.

A cat named Clementine traveled all the way from Dunkirk, New York, to Denver, Colorado, to find her people. The distance, cat-wise, is at least fifteen hundred miles and probably more. It is an awful trip, especially the last third of it before reaching the mountains. But another cat, named Tom, beat Clementine's record a few years later, in 1951.

Tom made it across the continent from St. Petersburg, Florida, to San Gabriel, California, in a successful search for his family. The distance in this case was a staggering two thousand five hundred miles, and his travel time was two years and six weeks. I happen to have been over that entire route, comfortably on wheels, and I am aghast when I think of Tom doing it on paw power alone. The trip becomes even more incredible when I consider the hazards. It is rattlesnake country all the way, and besides the countless dogs there are predators of every kind, from big cats to alligators and eagles. For nearly half the distance there are swamps without end, and great rivers to cross, followed by deserts, hundreds of miles of mountains, and still more deserts toward the end.

Frankly, I cannot understand how Clementine made it as far as Denver, and Tom's feat leaves me shaken. Yet there is no doubt whatever that these cats actually made these trips, for what they did has become a matter of historical record. Their cases have been carefully investigated, and they have been written about many times.

If Tom and Clementine had known where they were going, or had traveled

their routes before, what they did would have been marvelous enough. But neither cat had ever been West before, and they had no idea where their people had gone. They set out blindly into a strange world, driven by love of their families and guided by intuition alone.

In fairness to their owners I hasten to add that the reason Clementine was left behind on the New York farm was that she was about to have kittens. And Tom had been left in the house where he had always lived, to be cared for by the people who had bought it. Who would have dreamed that either cat, rather than be separated from loved ones, would have chosen to cross a continent on such a strange, blind search? But every cat is an individual, and you can never tell what one will do.

Dogs are more straightforward, and their actions can usually be anticipated—though not always. For a dog, the sun rises and sets in his master, and little else matters. Therefore war is a sad time for him. When the master leaves home and goes off to fight, what can a dog do except mope and wait? But a certain cocker spaniel, named Joker, was different. During World War II he got tired of moping and decided to take action.

Joker's master was Captain Stanley Raye, an Army man who lived in Pittsburg, California. Two weeks after the captain had left home for overseas duty, Joker went looking for him.

I should explain that Pittsburg is located far over on the upper curve of San Francisco Bay. All during the war the entire bay was jammed with ships that were being loaded at scores of docks that stretched past half a dozen bay cities. It was a vast waterfront area, with vessels leaving constantly for hundreds of wartime destinations.

It is doubtful that Captain Raye knew exactly where he was going when he boarded his transport, for in those days destinations were matters of utmost secrecy. All destinations in the war zone were called by code names. Therefore it is very unlikely that Joker could have picked up anything from his master that would have given him any sort of clue.

Joker had never been on a ship in his life, and we can only guess how many vessels he studied before he finally chose one at an Oakland dock. This is thirty miles from Pittsburg, and across the bay from San Francisco.

By this time, of course, Captain Raye had reached a certain distant Pacific island with a code name. Joker, undaunted, slipped aboard the vessel of his choice and became a stowaway. At sea, he was speedily found and would have been destroyed if one of the officers had not adopted him.

The transport stopped at several places in the Pacific, but Joker made no attempt to leave until it reached a particular island. Then he rushed ashore and ran straight to his master. When the officer who had adopted him learned the astounding facts, he was glad to let Captain Raye have his dog. Both Joker and the captain survived the war and were inseparable until Joker finally passed away at the ripe old age of fourteen.

Another dog, a smooth-haired terrier named Hector, accomplished a similar feat in locating his master. The main difference was that Hector was a seagoing dog who was unfortunately left ashore at Vancouver, British Columbia, when his vessel, the S. S. *Simaloer,* unexpectedly changed her berth. The ship was forced to sail before he could be found.

Hector's one love was Willem Mante, the *Simaloer*'s second officer. It must have been a heavy blow when the terrier reached the dock on schedule, after being given shore leave, and found both his master and the vessel gone. However, he didn't go tearing about in a frenzy and then give up in despair, as many a left-behind dog has done. Instead, Hector studied the situation, and began a careful inspection of the ships being loaded in the area.

The second officer of the S. S. *Hanley,* Harold Kildall, saw Hector come aboard and sniff thoughtfully at the cargo of lumber and sacked grain. While Kildall watched, the terrier went ashore and boarded four other ships along the same stretch of docks. The dog went about his inspection with a curious intentness that aroused Kildall's curiosity. Presently the officer forgot about him as the hatches were covered and the vessel was made ready for sailing.

The next morning the *Hanley* was plowing westward through the Pacific, well on her way to Japan. When Kildall came off duty, he was surprised to find Hector curled up in the corridor by the captain's cabin. The dog had chosen to go to sea on his ship and had managed to slip aboard unnoticed.

The reason for Hector's presence became clear eighteen days later, when the *Hanley* finally dropped anchor in Yokohama harbor and began unloading lumber. A short distance away another vessel was also unloading lumber. It was the S. S. *Simaloer.* At the sight of her, the dog, who had remained quiet and aloof all during the voyage, showed sudden excitement. Presently a sampan put out from the *Simaloer,* carrying two men ashore. As it neared the *Hanley*'s stern, Hector barked wildly and leaped into the water. One of the sampan's passengers began shouting and joyfully pulled the dog aboard. It was Willem Mante, his master.

Like the travels of Tom and Clementine, the voyages of Joker and Hector are matters of historical record and a great deal has been written about them. It can be argued, of course, that Hector was such a smart dog that he was able to listen to conversations and pick another vessel bound for the same destination as his own. But somehow I do not believe that. I think Hector's knowledge of the right ship to take came from another source—the same source that guided the other pets, the same source that helped Zan's second dove find its mate.

11

THE BARRIER OF SPEECH

EVERY TIME I GLANCE OUT of the studio windows and spot one of the wild folk going about his daily business, I wonder if he is only an ordinary member of his tribe, or someone quite super. There are super ones around, I'm sure. There are some, I believe, with abilities so extraordinary that many humans will find it hard to accept the truth about them.

Otters have first-rate brains, and so have skunks and a number of nocturnal visitors like the foxes and raccoons, that I seldom see. Woodchucks are supposed to be very dull fellows, though I do not find them so. There is a woodchuck living directly across the creek from the studio, and the very fact that he is old, fat, and still very much alive in spite of the odds—wildcats, dogs, and trigger-happy humans—speaks highly for the quality of his gray matter.

I even suspect the raven of having a super brain. The ones in my valley have everything a crow has, plus something extra. Crows are smart enough, but whenever I find myself under the inspection of one of their glittering-eyed big brothers, my ego suffers. The only way I can account for it is that some of them are really smarter than I am and know it.

Anyway, be it woodchuck, fox, or raven, or one of a dozen other creatures, I'm certain that somewhere in these forested mountains there exists a wild mentality with incredible powers. Even though I am absolutely convinced of it, I cannot prove it, but neither can anyone disprove it. Study the wild all you wish, and you will learn only that wild creatures are much more intelligent than tame ones.

What's wrong with studying a caged animal? Practically everything. It's a sad story. Have you ever thought how you would feel if you were locked in a small enclosure, month after month, away from everything in the world that mattered to you—friends, relatives, home, your special foods, and even the privacy that every creature must have part of the time? A wildcat in the wilds is a happy, playful fellow, full of cunning and with a great love of life. Caged, he is a snarling, demented wretch.

If some of our pets and domestic animals are capable of breathless mental feats, it is reasonable to assume that nature has endowed certain wild animals with the same abilities. But since wild creatures are much smarter than tame ones of the same species—nearly a third smarter, according to some estimates, and they actually have larger brains—then it is safe to assume that most wild geniuses must be truly extraordinary.

Frankly, I believe that there are many more super-intelligences among our pets than anyone dreams. Most owners of these animals never suspect what they have

and fail to put their pets through a test.

Chris, a famous dog owned by the Woods family of Warwick, Rhode Island—he was known as the Mathematical Mongrel—was five years old before his talents were discovered. Yet Chris himself said he would have been able to do the things he did three years earlier if anyone had asked him. Communicating by taps of his paw, he could quickly solve intricate problems involving large numbers that would stump people like me for hours. Once, when being tested by a pair of top engineers from the Du Pont Company, he solved an involved calculation in four minutes that took both men ten minutes to work out on paper.

The thing that really staggers me about Chris was his incredible foreknowledge. He knew exactly what the weather would be long ahead of time. He could predict the outcome of races, and he even foretold the day of his death several years before it happened. Curiously, he missed this last prediction by twenty-four hours.

There have been many genius dogs on the order of Chris, as you will find by checking the pet books at almost any large library. Nearly always their abilities were discovered by accident, and though their talents vary, many of them have two things in common: they are mathematical wizards, and they can foretell future events. Some are clever conversationalists, communicating by paw taps or barks to indicate numbers and the letters of the alphabet. This, of course, is a terribly slow method of responding to the spoken question, and it is a wonder that any animal would have the patience to bother with it. So it is not surprising that a few dogs have managed to get around this difficulty by actually learning to speak.

Now, I believe that many of these animal geniuses, along with their other talents, have an exceptional ability to read minds. I'm certain this was true of Jim, the Wonder Dog of Sedalia, Missouri. Jim, a setter owned by Sam Van Arsdale, was not only an incredible prophet (he predicted Kentucky Derby winners for seven straight years, along with the winner of a presidential election, as well as scores of other happenings), but he could always give correct answers to questions put to him in foreign languages.

How was this possible for a dog that knew only the English that was spoken around him?

No one could understand it at the time, for in Jim's day few people realized that dogs were mind readers. Now the truth is evident. The only way Jim could have understood a question in French or German was to know the thought behind each one. Languages are only systems of symbols that stand for thoughts. The symbols change with every language, but the thought remains the same.

That there must be thousands of geniuses and near-geniuses in the animal world, existing practically under our noses, is borne out by the experience, early in this century, of Karl Krall, of Elberfeld, Germany. In 1909, Krall inherited a horse named Hans from his friend, Wilhelm von Osten, a mathematics teacher. Hans had become famous all over Europe because Von Osten had taught him simple mathematics, as well as how to spell and compose sentences. Immediately upon inheriting Hans, Krall, who loved animals, bought four more horses and began to train them. The new horses, who were not known to have had any special abilities, were soon the equals of Hans. In six months all the horses had

leaped into a far higher mental realm and were actually doing difficult mathematical problems and rapidly stamping out conversations with their hooves.

One of them, an Arabian named Muhamed, became impatient with the stamping method and tried his best to learn to speak. However, he gave it up as soon as he discovered that a horse's mouth is not properly shaped for making human sounds. Other than dolphins, only a rare dog can manage it, and a few birds. But for this barrier of mouth shape, I expect we would be constantly startled by dogs and horses giving us the benefit of their wit—for some of them, to judge by recorded conversations, have sharp wits indeed and a fine sense of humor. Surely there are great numbers of them, undiscovered, with an intelligence level far higher than we mighty humans have ever guessed.

The Elberfeld horses, as they were called, became famous the world over, and a great deal has been written about them. But since their day, no doubt because the automobile has replaced the family horse, and few of us ever come into contact with horses, I can find no record of anyone taking the time and trouble to do what Karl Krall managed to do, and so the only animal geniuses that have come to light are those that have been discovered by accident.

Among the incredibly brilliant ones of more recent years, whose achievements will never be forgotten, are two horses: Black Bear, a little Shetland pony from Briarcliff, New York, and Lady Wonder, the famous "talking horse" of Richmond, Virginia.

Lady Wonder could not actually talk. But her owner, Mrs. Claudia Fonda, rigged up an apparatus something like the keyboard of a giant typewriter, which saved the mare all the extra work of tapping that slowed other animals in their communications. She had only to touch her muzzle to the lever, and the right number or letter would be flipped up for everyone to see. Black Bear was given a similar arrangement with numbered or lettered tabs hung on bars.

Many famous people—writers, scientists, and psychologists—came to study these horses and test them with hundreds of questions. Their almost miraculous accomplishments would fill a thick book. Black Bear, besides being able to read cards, face down, and reveal the contents of unopened letters, could always tell what a stranger was thinking. Lady Wonder was even more astounding. Her mind-reading ability left people shaken, but of far greater importance was the accuracy with which she could locate lost valuables and solve the fate of vanished children. Whatever was lost might be a thousand miles away, but no matter. She did not have to leave her Virginia stall to tell you exactly where to find it. Ask her, and she would consider the matter a few seconds. Then she would begin nudging the levers, and letter by letter the answer that may have baffled hundreds of people would be spelled out for all to read.

Morey Bernstein, author of *The Search for Bridey Murphy,* is one of many people who have good cause to remember Lady Wonder. On a plane trip from Denver to Houston, his bags, containing valuable business papers, were lost. The airline looked long and hard, but was unable to find them. Later, while Bernstein was in the East, a friend suggested that Lady Wonder might be of help. She was. Though it seemed impossible that the lost bags could be in a New York airport as she told him, that is where they were found. When an airline official asked if there was anything they could do to make up for all the trouble, Morey Bernstein

said yes, he would like a letter from them admitting the fact that it had taken Lady Wonder, the clairvoyant horse, to find his luggage. They gave him the letter.

How did Lady Wonder do it?

12

EVEN THE TREES

ONCE, IN A SMALL ITEM buried in the back of a newspaper, I read of a doctor in India who had made a wonderful discovery about trees. The rest of the world paid little attention to him, and both his name and his work have long been forgotten. But I'll always remember what he said and did.

Trees, he wanted people to know, are sensitive and have feelings just as all other living things have. When hurt, they are subject to shock, just as people are. And shock can kill.

Moving a tree, even when it is dormant, or pruning it drastically, is a great shock. Many trees die from such treatment, and all of them suffer for a long time afterward. So, he thought, why not give them an anesthetic to put them to sleep before any sort of operation? Wouldn't they recover more quickly and grow faster?

The very idea that a tree might have feelings has long been considered laughable to a great many people. But the doctor was sure that trees—in spite of having no sign of a nervous system—are extremely sensitive and would benefit tremendously if a pain-killer could be found for them. After much experimenting, he came up with an anesthetic that would actually put a tree to sleep. Trees anesthetized before surgery, or before being moved, recovered in a remarkably short time and grew much faster than trees that had not been treated this way.

So the Indian doctor proved that trees and plants are able to feel, and that they are as sensitive as many other forms of life. However, we still go on whacking away at trees with never a thought that they may be silently screaming every time we approach them with an ax.

Yet how can a tree know anything? It has no brain. And how can it possibly know ahead of time that someone is going to harm it?

The astounding evidence really gave scientists a jolt. It was the sort of thing they have always scoffed at. According to their rules, if you are unable to detect something through one of the five senses, or if you cannot put it through a repeatable laboratory test, then it doesn't exist. That's why ESP has had such rough going in the scientific world. Like quicksilver, it is hard to put your finger on it.

Then along came a man named Backster, who said, in effect, that a tree not only is highly sensitive, but it also can read the human mind.

If he had not been Cleve Backster, it is doubtful that anyone would have listened to him. Backster happened to be one of the world's top polygraph experts, and he proceeded to back up his statement with rolls of polygraph charts

from a series of experiments that could easily be repeated under laboratory conditions. By the time he had repeated them, with witnesses, the scientific world was goggle-eyed.

It all came about in this way: Cleve Backster was watering a plant in his office one morning when he suddenly wondered how long it would take for the moisture to travel from the dirt to the ends of the leaves. Would the electrodes on one of his polygraph machines be able to make the test?

A polygraph is more commonly known as a lie detector. It is a complicated electrical apparatus used in measuring the breathing, pulse, and blood pressure of a person being questioned. The resulting record made on a moving paper chart shows the person's emotional reaction to each question.

Cleve Backster thought that by attaching two electrodes to a leaf he would be able to tell when the water reached that area. Since water is a good conductor of electricity, he reasoned that the resistance should go down. If it did, then the inked graph line on the moving paper chart would go up.

However, it didn't work out that way. For reasons still unknown, the resistance increased when he watered the plant, and the graph line went down. Stranger still, the graph line showed a peculiar movement that should have come from a human instead of a plant. Cleve Backster, an expert in these matters, recognized it instantly as the result of an emotional reaction.

An emotional reaction in a plant? Something must be wrong!

He decided to test the plant thoroughly. If he threatened its existence in some manner, for instance by burning, perhaps the danger would trigger an emotional response—that is, if the plant really could respond. There must be a mistake somewhere.…

Backster was forced to leave the room for a few seconds to find a match. Returning, he lit the match and held it near the leaf with the electrodes. Instantly the moving chart showed a reaction. The reaction was automatically timed on the chart itself, which is marked off in five-second sections.

This exact timing is very important. When Cleve Backster stopped to examine the chart, he was thunderstruck to discover that the plant's main reaction had already taken place. It had happened *before* he had left the room to get the match. In fact, it had come the very instant he decided to burn the leaf.

The plant had read his mind.

This incredible event took place on February 2, 1966. The scientific world, which for so long had refused to credit ESP, was given a rude shaking, for this and later experiments give proof of a mysterious power that is entirely beyond the sphere of established science.

How this knowledge may actually affect our future is anyone's guess, for man is a curiously selfish creature. But it brought a complete change in Cleve Backster's life, for he knew he had stumbled upon something tremendous that should be carefully investigated. Before announcing what he had learned, he spent three years devising new experiments and putting scores of plants through an exhaustive series of tests. When he was finished and told in a detailed statement what he had learned, scientists were staggered.

Plants, he found, are mind readers and have ESP to a high degree. If anything happens around them that affects the emotions, they know it instantly. The killing of a living creature in their area, even though it is smaller than a fly and

the killing takes place beyond thick walls, will produce a violent reaction on their chart. They also have memories, for if another plant is destroyed in their presence, they know who did it for long afterward and can actually pick this person out of a crowd.

But most incredible of all is the feeling plants have for certain people, especially those who love and care for them. Distance seems to have no effect on their awareness. If a plant's owner is nervous about making a long flight on a plane, the plant knows it. Likewise it knows immediately when the plane lands and its owner is safe on the ground. These reactions have been timed and checked over and over on the charts of many plants.

Of course, it has been known for a long time that plants—and by this I mean all plants from tiny grasses to trees—respond to love and prayer. Countless tests both here and abroad have shown that a well-prayed-over garden always has a remarkably higher yield than another exactly like it that has been given only an equal amount of ordinary care.

It is also a fact that a much-loved plant or tree often withers and dies when its owner dies. When I first heard this I thought it was just a silly superstition, the sort of thing old mountaineers whisper to each other after a funeral. But I have learned better. I have seen it happen a number of times, and now I know the staggering truth behind it.

The green holly beyond my terrace, the big sycamore tree near it, and the potted oleanders here in the studio—they are not just woody growths, dull and insensitive. They are living creatures. That is how I have come to think of them.

I have also begun to suspect that, like some of the animals I have mentioned, they are aware of certain events well ahead of time. I have no acceptable proof, but I am sure Cleve Backster will uncover that fact. After all, if they can read minds.…

Some plants and trees apparently also know when they are going to die. When death is on the way, these trees will put forth a great wealth of blossoms, more than they have ever had before. When summer is over and the seeds are mature, they drop their leaves for the last time.

Whenever there is a big fuss over a new road—especially one that cuts through forest that a few earnest souls are trying desperately to save—you will hear a lot of outraged screaming on both sides. The majority, of course, practically roar that only people are important, and that trees do not count.

To whom are people important? Only to other people, I fear. If all of us were to vanish suddenly, our battered planet would begin to thrive and bloom as it has not bloomed for a long time. The air would become pure again; soon dirty streams would run clean, and hundreds of creatures that are now nearly extinct would flourish once more.

But suppose all the trees died—and don't think such a catastrophe isn't possible—what would happen then? Everything would die, for trees are the key to life. Without them, the earth would become as barren as the moon.

13

THE LANGUAGE OF THE WILD

HAVE YOU EVER camped by a stream in the woods, well away from the sounds of man, and listened to the voices of the night?

If you never have, you have missed something tremendous. Not that you will know it is tremendous all at once, the first time you have the experience. The feeling steals over you slowly and captures you. You may not realize the precise moment, but suddenly you are part of it all—you are one with the trees around you, the whispering water and the wind in the leaves, the tick-tocking frogs and countless katydids and crickets, and all the other creatures that make up the orchestra of the living dark. As the dark trembles with their music, you are caught up in it, and you are one with it, and at the same time, without quite knowing what it is you know, you are aware of your place in the entire great scheme of things.

More than that, you find yourself realizing that everything around you is interrelated and is a pulsing, feeling part of a vast enfolding whole. As it throbs with life, you are conscious of the mighty heartbeat under it all.

A heartbeat? Yes, nature has a pulse, and every natural sound you hear will be in time with it.

Go out into the night and listen. Soon you will pick up the rhythm. On Very quiet nights even the rustling of a leaf or the breaking of a twig will be in time with the chirping crickets. If there is a note of discord, it will come from man himself.

Only man, and man alone, is out of step with the marvelous natural world around him. He has locked himself away and become insensitive to most of it, blind to its wonders. Though it cries to him in a multitude of languages for the ear and in one great language for the heart and mind, he cannot hear it.

But the wild hears him. Everything around him knows exactly how he feels and whether his intentions are good or bad. Wild creatures are always aware when something is wrong, and if man's need is great, they are often willing to help.

Nearly everyone has heard of dolphins coming to the rescue of drowning persons. They have been known to save exhausted swimmers by keeping them afloat and nudging them toward the nearest beach or shoal. How does a dolphin become aware that the situation of a tired swimmer is suddenly desperate?

I have known people to drown with bathers all around them. When I was very young it almost happened to me, because no one realized what was going on. It was impossible to cry out for help. My strength was gone and it was all I could

do to gasp for breath. I remember the terrible silent prayer and cry that came from somewhere deep within me. Had there been a dolphin handy, or even a friendly dog, I am sure they would have heard, although the humans around me were deaf to the cry. Yet my prayer was answered, for somehow I managed to reach the dock and cling to it until my strength returned.

A far more anguished prayer and cry must have poured from a Canadian boy named Rheal Guindon, one bitter night back in 1956, because it brought immediate help from the wild. Rheal, a long way from home on a fishing trip with his parents, had the shattering experience of watching their boat turn over and seeing both of them drown. One can imagine how he felt when he finally set out alone through the woods for the nearest town, many miles away.

This happened in November. When night came the temperature went down below zero. By then Rheal was exhausted and shaking with the cold, and all he could do was fall to the ground and pray.

His prayer was quickly answered, for suddenly in the pitch-black darkness he felt the warmth of furry bodies pressing close around him. In the morning he discovered that his protectors were three beavers that had kept him from freezing during the night.

Young Rheal made it safely to the town, and his strange story was checked and reported by the Central Press of Canada.

How did the beavers know that the boy was in such desperate need of help? In his very anguish, coupled with a prayer—which is a call for help—Rheal, without realizing it, was using the silent language of nature that every creature understands.

Knowing the independence of cats, it is startling to learn how often they have come to the aid of people. In *The Strange World of Animals and Pets,* Vincent and Margaret Gaddis report a typical incident. In Lawrence, Massachusetts, an elderly woman who had been trapped alone in her home by a sudden illness would have frozen to death except for the help of six stray cats. She was unable to leave her bed when the furnace went out, but the six cats, with the help of her own cat and dog, kept her warm until the neighbors came to investigate. The same authors tell of another cat who helped a dog that had gone blind and forever after guided the dog away from danger.

I do not doubt that telepathy has much to do with many such instances, but with it goes a silent appeal that cannot be denied.

Pure telepathy is primarily a mental thing. But nature's great language is largely emotional. It is the feeling behind the thought that gives it impact. The two, of course, are used together, for the mental and the emotional are always mixed. But as we sift down to the bottom we find that the basic messages—the ones that all living things can understand—are entirely emotional.

There are not many such messages, but their range is wide. Some of the most common are joy, fear, love, and hate. These are followed by sorrow, anguish, despair, and something akin to joy that we might call contentment. Then there are hunger, pain, and the need for assistance, all of which can become strongly emotional messages, and are easily received, possibly even by Cleve Backster's plants. A number of similar reactions can be emotionally expressed, and one of the most powerful of all is a threat, which most of us have experienced.

Once while hiking in the mountains I came to a glade with an interesting

ravine on the other side that I wanted to explore, but as I took a few steps across the glade I suddenly became afraid and stopped. I could see no movement, nor could I hear anything. Yet fear was rising in me, and I wanted to turn and run away from that spot as fast as I could. Something—in this case I will call it instinct—made me ease backward slowly. Not until I was out of the glade did I turn, and then I glimpsed the thicket of young pines with many of them bent over to the ground. Bear cubs do this at play.

The next morning I learned from a rancher that the ravine was the home of a grouchy she-bear with cubs, and that I was fortunate in feeling her silent threat and retreating when I did. Many men, in a similar situation, have been badly mauled when they ventured too close.

I have often watched wild animals—and tame ones too—pause and go through a sort of ritual before proceeding in a certain direction. First, as they stop and look around, there is a twitching of the nose and a turning of the ears as they test scent and sight and sound; then they stand absolutely motionless, as if lost in thought.

I used to think they were trying to make up their minds about what to do next, or perhaps they were listening to something. But now I realize they must be testing the thought waves, and picking up various feelings around them.

Besides feeling uneasiness or fear, most of us have been in places that raised our spirits or lowered them, or brought on a sudden wave of pleasure. This is a common experience. Without realizing it, we are responding to thoughts being broadcast by someone or something in nature's universal language. And, equally without realizing it, each of us is constantly using that silent language to inform all life around us how badly we feel, or how very much we love a thing, or hate it, or wish it would dry up and blow away.

So it is understandable that some people avoid us, or flowers bloom marvelously for a few of us, whereas for others the very grass dies, and dogs growl instead of wagging their tails. It is as simple as that—except that we humans have forgotten how to use the language, whereas all the wild depends upon it for survival.

There is another source from which knowledge comes to the wild, knowledge of the most vital kind. It is a source that the world of man is almost out of contact with and no longer understands.…

14

THE GREAT QUESTIONS

WE HAVE COME FAR into a vast strangeness, and left behind us a curious trail of unanswered questions. They are puzzles that have worried serious thinkers for generations.

It all began with a pair of white doves that mysteriously found each other after being separated. Why was Zan able to catch them both so easily when the rest of us could not get near them? Remembering the story of Paula and her snake, I am sure that the same instant and mutual feelings, tremendous admiration and trust, had a lot to do with Zan's strange power. And I am equally sure there was a reason why the second dove flew past the studio windows and looked in at us. It was to attract our attention, especially Zan's.

Did the dove really want to be caught? How else could it join its mate?

But just how was the second dove able to locate its mate in a totally strange place?

I have little doubt that the two birds were in touch with each other, in some manner, from the beginning. But even if we admit that they were able to communicate, just what could the first dove have told the second?

Only these facts: (1) it was in thick forest, in high country, when a boy caught it; (2) the boy carried it away in a closed vehicle, which wound around in several directions for a short time, during which trip it saw nothing, for the boy kept it under his jacket; and (3) it was taken from the vehicle and placed in a closed box in a dark room of a dwelling in an unknown location.

I can think of no other information the first dove could have given to the second, unless, of course, it was able to read my mind. If I were accidentally lost in an unknown jungle and could broadcast only those bare facts to someone searching for me, I fear I would be forever among the missing. It could hardly have been telepathy, which does not seem to be directional like a beacon, that brought the second dove to my studio window.

My explanation is that the dove made use of intuition, a form of ESP, or extrasensory perception. ESP is defined simply as the power of quickly knowing a truth without the use of reason or the senses. But behind it is that ever-baffling *why* and *how*.

Intuition, or ESP, is only one of many forms of psychic ability about which very little is actually known. Certain people, like the famous Dutchman Peter Hurkos, are especially gifted with it. He, and others like him, have been able to locate lost humans and animals and all kinds of lost objects, merely by letting intuition guide them.

How can they do this? There are some interesting theories about it. Such communication seems absolutely impossible, but it has been used countless times, and I have used it myself on occasion, though I have no more ability of this kind than most other people.

The curious truth is that everyone, and every living thing, has such ability to some extent. Too many of us, however, have been taught not to believe in such matters. What happens to a talent we do not believe in and never use? It would be of about as much help to us as an arm that had been tied up for years and never exercised.

Zan's doves, however, had no one to tell them that some things are impossible. When its psychic sense told the second dove to fly in a certain direction, it had a feeling too strong to be denied. That feeling brought it straight to my studio windows. There, at the sight of us inside, another strong feeling took over, and the dove allowed Zan to catch it a minute or two later.

Intuition becomes even more baffling when we consider how Tom and Clementine were able to use it. They were the cats who set forth into an unknown world and braved an entire continent to find their people. And wasn't it intuition that guided the dogs Joker and Hector to the right docks and the right ships, so that they could find their masters at unknown destinations thousands of miles across an ocean?

Using intuition, you know something instantly, but it is not knowledge you have worked out for yourself at that particular moment. You are in immediate need of an answer, and it comes to you. You receive it. In order to be received, information must come from somewhere. There has to be a source.

The genius dogs who could solve intricate mathematical problems and predict the future and the incredible horses with the ability to read unopened letters or find lost objects and vanished people—they, too, had to receive information from somewhere.

But from where? And how?

The *how* of it seems the simplest part. All life is interrelated, and each tiny bit of life is a pulsating bundle of energy with its own electric field. It can send forth an impulse as well as receive it. It is as if each of us and all our fellow travelers on this spaceship, including the plants, were equipped with a personal radio that could send and receive messages.

But where and what is this somewhere that sends us answers when we need them?

If one goes by the evidence—and the evidence has become overwhelming—one might truthfully say that there is a sort of psychic "information center" located within easy reach of every living thing. This "center" is like a vast memory bank, for in it must be stored all thoughts from every source—past, present and, even the future.

In one of my books, about a future time when man is done with killing, I made use of this idea and called it the Pool of Knowledge. Other writers with similar beliefs have given it other names, for the conviction that there is such a repository of thought and information goes back thousands of years. Today we find it in the writings of such great thinkers and psychologists as William McDougall and Carl Jung. These men were convinced that there is a vast psychic realm that influences all life. Jung thought of it as a great collective unconscious,

a kind of reservoir of all knowledge from all minds. Even some of the doubting scientists are beginning to nod and say that Carl Jung could be right. A few of the bolder ones have actually suggested that there may be a fifth dimension, which influences and governs everything in this earthly existence.

Think of the center of intelligence as you will, there is still the almost certain reality of it. How else can you explain the way birds and animals have been guided so accurately over the vast distances they have traveled to unknown destinations? How else could Lady Wonder, without ever leaving her Virginia stable, solve the many mysteries that men could not unravel? Call it by any name you wish—the Pool of Knowledge, the Psychic Information Center, the Great Collective Unconscious, or the Fifth Dimension—I am certain of its existence, and I believe that the ability to make use of it is part of the equipment included by the Designer of the Spaceship Earth for the growth and survival of its passengers.

But what of the trees? How can a mindless plant possibly make use of such a system?

There are still matter-of-fact scientists who insist that men are nothing but highly developed animals, and that when we die that is the end of us. But science has already discovered that all matter, including our bodies, is actually a form of energy, and that the body is really a fine machine that we inhabit during our lifelong journey to another form of energy. So the truth—that we have known all the time anyway—is that we are souls in earthly bodies.

When a man dies, his soul—the thinking and feeling reality of him—leaves the body and goes on to another plane. When a tree dies, something very much aware and full of feeling leaves it and goes on also. If this something is not the tree's soul, what is it?

There was a time in our history when people believed that only the males among us had souls. After much wrangling and swallowing of pride, it was finally admitted that perhaps females had souls also. But to date not very many of us have been able to swallow enough pride to allow anything like a soul to other creatures.

Life is a strange and curious thing. We know that all life, simply because it *is* life, has to be closely related. If one form of it has a soul, why shouldn't all forms of it be so endowed? After all, what is life?

What do the animals themselves think of it?

Two of the several famous dogs of Mannheim, Germany, who were highly intelligent conversationalists, turned out to be philosophers as well. One, a terrier named Lola, often discussed life, death, and the future of the soul, and never doubted that she had one. Another, a dachshund named Kurwenal, said that dogs have souls, and that they are like the souls of men.

If dogs have souls, so do cats, mice, and caterpillars. And if all these have souls, so do mindless plants that can read your mind. After all, what part of them is it that does the reading?

It is time we looked again at ourselves and realized how very limited we are. We must wake up to the hard-to-believe fact that we humans, with almost no comprehension of it, are blindly existing in a marvelous realm of telepaths and mind readers. We are surrounded by them. All other living things, from the smallest creatures to the very trees, are much more aware of us than we are of them. Not only that, but they are in much closer touch with the mysterious

forces that govern life, and the great scheme that binds the many parts into a whole. We have forgotten our place in it.

Mighty man has dominion over his badly scarred earth and every living thing on it. He has forcibly made it his. But instead of being the wise custodian of a priceless treasure, he has acted like a drunken monarch and squandered the greater part of it. The guardian has abused his trust.

It is long past the time for the guardian to come awake and somehow make amends. His ailing vessel is still green with life, and the task ahead is to keep it so.

To do that, we of the race of man must never again forget our kinship with the realm beyond our doors. Let us go out into the living night and listen and hear the voices and the music of it, and feel the slow eternal drumbeat that marks the pulse of life.

If we can hear it and feel it and know that we are part of it, perhaps some of our lost awareness will return.

Surely we shall become better guardians of our treasure.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their kindness and help in the task of research, and in the gathering of material for this book, I am deeply indebted to the following people: Mildred Moore Davenport, of the Macon Public Library of North Carolina; McKie and Ernestine Salley, of Tarpon Springs; Randy Grobe, of Sarasota; Cecil Ryder, Sr., and Cecil Ryder, Jr.; and Vincent H. and Margaret Gaddis, whose book *The Strange World of Animals and Pets* was an invaluable reference.

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Cover design by Jesse Hayes

ISBN: 978-1-4976-5254-5

This edition published in 2014 by Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.
345 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014
www.openroadmedia.com

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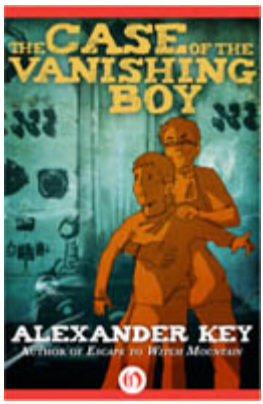

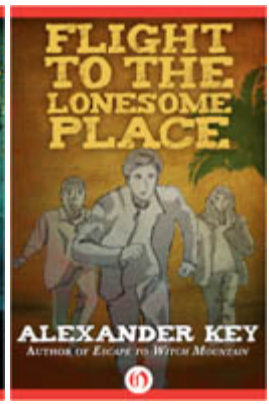

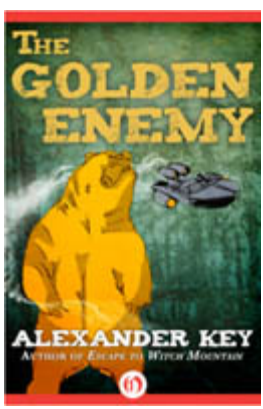

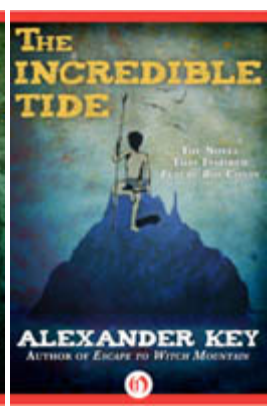

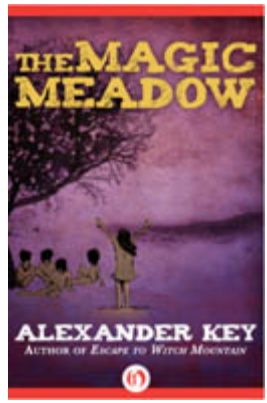

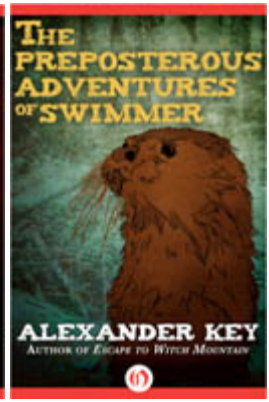

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